

## **1.2 HISTORY OF SECURITY CONCERNS AT THE WHITE HOUSE COMPLEX**

From the laying of the White House foundation until World War II, the grounds were open to free public access. However, from its construction in 1800 through World War II, the security measures at the White House were steadily increased. World War II brought changes so dramatic that security measures would never again be as relaxed.

The White House is among the few chief-executive residences to operate an open museum and to allow its state rooms to be open most days to visitors (the White House is open to the public from Tuesday through Saturday). Those responsible for providing security at the Complex have always had to strike a balance between functional needs and the preservation of the White House's image as an enduring symbol of democracy.

Security concerns at the White House Complex were heightened when a bomb was set off in the Capitol Building in 1971. In 1974, an Army private stole a helicopter and landed it on the White House South Lawn, further arousing security concerns. Decades of discussions concerning permanent closure of East Executive Avenue to vehicular traffic were revived during the Administration of President Carter in the late 1970s. West Executive Avenue has been closed to public vehicular traffic since World War II.

In the 1980s, in the wake of another bomb explosion at the Capitol and bomb threats to the White House, security concerns were further heightened and a number of measures were taken to increase security around the White House perimeter. In 1984, a report entitled "Current White House Problems of Security, Traffic, and Appearance," was issued by architect John Carl Warnecke, the designer of the Lafayette Square project for former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. One of this report's recommendations was tunneling Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House and converting the surface street into a landscaped pedestrian area.

In 1982, East Executive Avenue was permanently closed to vehicular traffic and redesigned as a pedestrian mall. The installation of reinforced concrete security barriers in the front of the White House was completed in 1988, and security barriers were installed along E Street to the south of the White House in 1993.

In 1994, following the September 12 crash of a single-engine private aircraft on the South Lawn of the White House, the Department of the Treasury established the White House Security Review to conduct a thorough and comprehensive investigation into the circumstances leading to the crash.

Shortly after the Review was established, another incident occurred. A man standing on the sidewalk outside the north fence of the White House fired twenty-nine rounds from a semi-automatic assault rifle toward the north facade. In response to this and several other security-related incidents, the scope of the security issues being studied by the White House Security Review was expanded to include an even more comprehensive review of the security of the White House. Indeed, the Review was directed to examine "[t]he dangers posed to the White House Complex and the protectees therein by air or ground assaults" (White House Security Review, Pg. 3). An independent advisory committee consisting of people of national

prominence, integrity, and expertise was selected to provide guidance to the review team and to ensure a comprehensive and impartial review.

The White House Security Review was completed in May 1995. The interests of national security, the security of the President and the first family, future Presidents, and the White House Complex demand that most of the information gathered and recommendations presented be strictly safeguarded and classified. The review resulted in 11 major recommendations that would further enhance security. Included was a recommendation to reroute vehicular traffic around the White House Complex and to convert Pennsylvania Avenue to a pedestrian street.